



DEALING WITH ANXIETY



IN A NUTSHELL



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Anxiety, anxiety disorders and their symptoms

Know your enemy. By understanding what is going on in our body and our mind, you can start to look at whatever you are suffering from in a more objective fashion. You can demystify it and reduce the catastrophisation that goes with it. In the case of anxiety, you might even realise that sometimes, your enemy is just your best friend that has become overprotective.

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is what we feel when we are worried, tense or afraid – particularly about things that are about to happen, or which we think could happen in the future. It is a natural and useful response when we perceive that we are under threat. It can be experienced through our thoughts, feelings and physical sensations. Most people feel anxious at times. It's particularly common to experience some anxiety while coping with stressful events or changes, especially if they could have a big impact on your life.

Anxiety is totally normal and exists due to a set of bodily functions that we share with many other animals. It is an internal alarm system designed to protect us from the dangers surrounding us. When required, this system would make us hyper-alert by giving us a boost of adrenaline and cortisol that would increase the heart rate and boost the amount of oxygen going to our limbs, so we were better able to fight or run from danger. It reduces our ability to reason and think logically in favour of fast decisions and a more physical response.

This is commonly called the 'freeze, fight or flight' response - it's something that happens automatically in our bodies, and we have very limited control over it. A part of your brain, the amygdala, takes over and prioritise quick action. When this mechanism is triggered, the brain would tap into your experiences and pick whatever response seems to suit the situation best.

We've evolved to have a sensitive alarm system. For example, imagine you're an early homo-sapiens wandering in the wild and you hear some rustling in the bushes. It could be a tiger, or it could be a gazelle. You could decide to play it safe and run, or you could decide to investigate to make sure the danger is real. Those who run away every time have more chances to remain safe than those who investigate:

“Oh my goodness! It really is a tiger pouncing on me! Arrrghhhh....”

Logic and detailed analysis can wait for you to be safe. In many occasions, this mechanism can literally save your life. You can be thankful that you can experience anxiety.

When is it a problem?

If you live in the wild, or in a dangerous environment/neighbourhood, it's good to be on high alert and remain safe. But for most people in our civilised society, this system can become maladapted, responds to non-existence threats or overreacts.

For example, it may be a problem for you if:

- your feelings of anxiety are very strong or last for a long time
- your fears or worries are out of proportion to the situation
- you avoid situations that might cause you to feel anxious
- your worries feel very distressing or are hard to control
- you regularly experience symptoms of anxiety, which could include panic attacks.

If you're one of the lucky one who never had an anxiety disorder, imagine trying try to work in an office where the burglar alarm is always on. Each time anyone does anything in the office, it goes off and deafens you. You can't think, you can't work.

Anxiety disorders are often like that. The "panic signal" is often going on in the background, making it hard to function properly, and making even the most trivial task difficult to complete.

Many people underestimate the amount of brain power that is wasted by anxiety disorders. Not only the alarm signal can be loud, but the brain is also very busy trying to rationalise the signal. The brain applies the "*there's no smoke without fire*" principle.

Anxiety sufferers develop a very particular set of skills, skills they acquire over a very long career as anxious people:

- The first skill is predicting the future. The only problem is that they are generally very bad at it, and the vast majority of the worst-case scenario they imagine never happen. It's not really worth the effort.
- The second skill is a very vivid imagination. The issue here is that they use it to imagine problems, obstacles and dreadful situation. They have nothing left to try to find solutions or workarounds. If only we could aim that imagination at something more positive...

What are the symptoms?

Here are a few of the common physical symptoms caused by anxiety. Everybody is different so the number of symptoms and their intensity will vary wildly from person to person.

- Increased heart rate
- Choking sensations
- Increased muscle tension
- Bruxism (teeth grinding)
- Palpitations
- Hyperventilation
- Tingling in the extremities
- Dizziness
- Difficulty in breathing
- Feeling sick
- Tightness across the chest
- Tension headaches
- Wanting to use the toilet more often
- Hot flushes
- Increased sweating
- Dry mouth
- Shaking

Anxiety also affects how you think and behave. Some of the most common psychological symptoms are:

- Thinking you are losing control
- Thinking you may be going mad
- Fearing you are about to die
- Fearing you are having a heart attack
- Thinking you have a major health problem
- Feeling that people are observing you
- Feeling detached from your surroundings and anyone in it
- Having the compulsion to run away and escape from wherever you are
- Feeling on high alert about everything around you

Another important symptom that is often overlooked is **avoidance**. Avoiding triggers and stressful situations or places is an easy way to deal with the issue, but it is only a short-term strategy and doesn't address the underlying issue. Just like in our example of the burglar alarm, you might learn that by remaining very, very still, you can avoid the alarm getting triggered. Or you don't come to work at all. Either way, nothing gets done and the issue is still there. You never learn to deal with your issues, and you reinforce the message that there is danger again and again. You then become anxious about what could trigger your anxiety.

When always using avoidance, you never have a chance to realise whether your worries and fears about a situation are justified. (spoiler alert: very often, they are not). By fearing fear itself, you get caught in a vicious cycle where you forget to live the life you deserve.

The next big one is **depression**. Anxiety and depression often go hand in hand. Many people who have one will experience the other at some point. In fact, nearly half of those diagnosed with depression are also diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. Depression can lead to anxiety, and anxiety can lead to depression. Having an anxiety disorder is the single most significant predictor that a person will develop depression.

The good news is that, despite what sufferers might think, it is possible to get better. More about this in the next chapters.

Examples of anxiety disorders

- Some phobias are linked to anxiety disorders (not an exhaustive list):
 - Agoraphobia
 - Claustrophobia
 - Emetophobia (fear of vomiting)
 - Toilet phobia
- Anticipatory anxiety
- Body dysmorphic disorder
- Depersonalisation disorder
- Generalised anxiety disorder
- Health anxiety
- Hoarding
- Obsessive compulsive disorder
- Panic disorder
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Social anxiety

Is anxiety treatable?

Anxiety itself is a normal emotion and we would not look to 'cure' it. There are many occasions where anxiety is helpful and useful. That said, there are a lot of factors that can help you to control your feelings of anxiety. A combination of therapy, medication and self-help strategies can help anybody affected by anxiety disorders. They help overcome your disorder and reach a point where you control your anxiety rather than the anxiety controlling you and affecting your quality of life.

In the next chapters, I'll describe a few ways to help yourself move along faster and more easily along the road to recovery.

Are panic attacks life threatening?

The physical symptoms of a panic attack, such as rapid breathing, chest pains and pins and needles are very similar to those of a heart attack, therefore it is not unusual for people experiencing such an attack to convince themselves that they are about to die. This is not the case. Nobody has died of a panic attack. It is simply the body reacting to increased adrenaline caused by panic. It is not life threatening.

It is very unpleasant, but not harmful.

Are anxiety disorders common?

Anxiety disorders are very common. In a survey covering Great Britain, 1 in 6 adults had experienced some form of 'neurotic health problem' in the previous week. The most common neurotic disorders were anxiety and depressive disorders. More than 1 in 10 people are likely to have a 'disabling anxiety disorder' at some stage in their life. An estimated 13% of the adult population will develop a specific form of anxiety known as a phobia at some point in their life.

Knowing that many others suffer just like you do may not help you feel better in itself, but you have to remember at least 2 things:

- You are not alone.
- There is help out there.

How to manage an anxiety disorder

There are ways to look after yourself to mitigate and manage your anxiety so it remains reasonable. While these will not cure your anxiety disorder, they will go a long way to help you regain some control over your thoughts and emotions. You could look at them as a first aid box for your mental health. You might give yourself enough breathing space to develop new strategies and healthier thought patterns.

Exercise

As your body gets flooded with adrenaline, cortisol and other chemicals, you are preparing to be active. The problem is when your body is exposed to these hormones chronically for too long, it takes its toll on your muscles and organs. The quickest way to eliminate them and all that pent-up energy is some good old exercise!

You can go to the gym, join a yoga class, go swimming, lift some weights or just go for a jog. It doesn't have to be intensive. If you feel worn out, you might still be able to just walk the dog, or simply go for a brisk walk on your own. You also get the added benefit of getting fitter in the process.

Get out, change the scenery, clear your head.

Sunlight

To many, sunshine and blue sky is synonymous to happiness. There's a valid reason for this. Lack of sunlight affects a part of the brain called the hypothalamus and stops it working properly, which may affect:

- **The production of melatonin:** melatonin is a hormone that makes you feel sleepy; in people with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), the body may produce it in higher than normal levels.
- **production of serotonin:** serotonin is a hormone that affects your mood, appetite and sleep; a lack of sunlight may lead to lower serotonin levels, which is linked to feelings of depression.
- **body's internal clock** (circadian rhythm): your body uses sunlight to time various important functions, such as when you wake up. It's been shown that lower light levels during the winter may disrupt your body clock and lead to symptoms of SAD.

According to national surveys in the UK, across the population approximately 1 in 5 people have low vitamin D levels. You can use vitamin supplements or go out as much as you can. Don't forget your sunscreen! A recent study has even shown that while sunscreen reduce the sun's adverse effects, it allows excellent vitamin D synthesis. Stay safe.

Sleep

Anxiety and lack of sleep feed off each other — they are natural bedfellows. Not only do they reinforce each other as time goes on, they quickly have negative effects on your body and mental state. When you are tired your brain is unable to function correctly, your attention span drops, as does your concentration. Reasoning becomes more difficult and your memory suffers: your mind starts racing as soon as your head hits the pillow. Many things pop into your head: your to-do list, that thing you should (or shouldn't) have said to your boss, the bills that need paying, that weird pain you can't explain, etc. Then you catch a glimpse of the clock and realise how late it already is. It becomes hard to tell whether you can't sleep because you're anxious, or you're anxious because you can't sleep.

Adopting a good sleep hygiene goes a long way to help have proper quality sleep and give yourself a fighting chance against anxiety. Avoid caffeine and alcohol, limit screen time before bed, find a relaxing activity before sleep and have regular bedtime routine. The bedroom should be reserved for sleeping, relaxing and sex. Obviously, all those activities are not exclusive to the bedroom; you can relax anywhere you want as long as it's safe to do so.

Medication

From benzodiazepines, beta-blockers to SSRIs, there is a wide range of medications that can help you manage your anxiety. If you're trying to decide whether or not to treat your anxiety with medication, it's important to weigh the pros and cons in conjunction with your doctor. It's also important to learn about the common side effects of the anxiety medication you are considering. Side effects of anxiety medication range from mild nuisances such as dry mouth to more severe problems such as acute nausea or pronounced weight gain. For any anxiety medication, you will have to balance the side effects against the benefits.

Opinions about taking medications are very divided. Some people swear by them, others refuse them in fear to become "zombies". Meds are like crutches. Some people need them permanently, others just use them to stabilise themselves, and there's some who

can hop along happily without them. Your situation is unique, so the decision is a personal one. If you decide to use them, remember that there is no shame in taking them, just like there's no shame to take medication for the flu! You can combine them with other management tools to help yourself manage your anxiety.

Music

Music is often likened to a universal language, and it has an influence on everybody. There are scientific reasons for why it has such an impact over our minds. The pitch, tempo, volume and the dynamics of music affects our brain by stimulating us in various ways. The right music can energise you, calm you down, get you excited, get you down or make you feel euphoric. From tribal drumming to modern styles, the effects of music have been documented for years and one thing is certain: listening to music can help us improve the way we think, feel and behave. Go ahead and create your personal playlist full of those positive tunes. Whether you prefer head-bangers or chilled-out tracks, you know which one you need.

Talk to someone

Talking to someone you trust about what's making you anxious could be a relief. It may be that just having someone listen to you and show they care can help in itself. Talking openly about your fears and worries can go along way. It helps you realise that you are not going mad. By articulating your issues and talking about them out loud can help you looking at them in a clearer way, as opposed to the circular thinking you would have been stuck in for so long.

You might also be surprised how many of your friends are or have been in the same situation and will be ready to help. If you aren't able to open up to someone close to you, the Samaritans and Anxiety UK both run helplines that you can call to talk to someone. You'll find their details and other useful online resources at the end of this document ("Useful online resources").

You might not want to tell your employer about it because you are worried about confidentiality or how you may be treated. However, if your anxiety impacts your work, or vice-versa, it might be something to consider. Your employer may not have realised there was an issue and might be able to make some relevant and practical changes to your work environment. You might also be getting support from your company.

It's a judgement call that depends on many things (your employer, their attitude, the work you do, etc...) so it would be wise to educate yourself about your rights first.

Self-help techniques

A very common sign of anxiety disorders is the negative self-talk. When out of control, anxiety lies and bullies you. It bombards you with horrifying thoughts day-in, day-out. It doesn't give you a moment of peace, even when you're sleeping. It wakes you up to torment you. It must be stopped!

Here are a few tried-and-tested physical and psychological tools that can help you (or someone else) get the anxiety back under control.

Breathing

In our brain, there is sympathetic nervous system that triggers the “freeze, fight or flight response”. There is another opposite system called the parasympathetic nervous system that triggers the relaxation response. It acts as a brake.

One way to turn it on is to stimulate the vagus nerve. The vagus nerve, along with stimulating your body's relaxation response, can inhibit inflammation, slow down your heart, and even help you make memories. So, there are a few nice side-effects.

The good news is that you don't need a medical degree to do stimulate it. The simplest methods involve breathing techniques. I know you'd think most people are good at breathing. They are but for most, there is room for improvement.

Here are 2 simple techniques that works great:

Power breathing (or Deep breathing):

1. breathe in for a count of 7
2. then breathe out for a count of 11.

It is that simple. Make sure that when you are breathing in, you are doing deep '*diaphragmatic breathing*' (your diaphragm moves down and pushes your stomach out as you take in a breath) rather than shallower higher lung breathing. Another tip is to drop the shoulders as you breathe out and tell yourself to just let go and relax.

If you find that it's difficult to lengthen your breaths to a count of 11 or 7, then reduce the count to breathing in for 3 and out to 5, or whatever suits you best, as long as the out-breath is longer than the in-breath.

Box breathing, also known as square breathing:

1. Inhale slowly and deeply to the count of four. Feel the air fill your lungs, one section at a time, until your lungs are completely full and the air moves into your abdomen.
2. Hold your breath for another slow count of four.
3. Exhale through your mouth for the same slow count of four, expelling the air from your lungs and abdomen. Be conscious of the feeling of the air leaving your lungs.
4. Hold your breath for the same slow count of four before repeating this process.

If you're new to box breathing, it may be difficult to get the hang of it. You may get dizzy after a few rounds. This is normal. As you practice it more often, you'll be able to go longer without the dizziness. If you get dizzy, stay sitting for a minute and resume normal breathing.

Bilateral stimulation

This is a very simple technique that can be done discreetly anywhere.

First become aware of your anxious feeling and give it a score between 0 and 10 (0 being super calm, 10 being the worst). You now have your baseline to compare the results to.

Grab a mobile phone, a set of keys, one of those stress-ball, a bottle of water (or anything you can toss) with one hand. Pass the object back and forth, from one hand to the other, crossing the midline. Keep one hand in front of you as the other swings away. After about a minute, stop, take a nice deep breath and check where the anxiety level is at between 0 and 10. It's likely to have diminished or even dissipated. Repeat until it's gone.

It's very discreet. You just look like someone playing mindlessly with something in their hands. The overly simplified explanation is that when anxiety takes place mainly in one brain hemisphere. This technique activates both sides of the brain, spreading the electrical impulses, "drowning" and defusing the anxiety cluster.

Time out

Start by taking a few deep breaths, focus on breathing out softly and relaxing, dropping your shoulders.

Pick a spot in front of you and stare at it. Make it THE most important spot in the whole wide world.

Then, slowly, become aware of your peripheral vision so you can see all the space around the spot while still staring at it.

Next, still staring at that spot, expand your vision all the way up to the ceiling and all the way down. Continue expanding it, allowing your field of vision to open so that you can imagine almost being aware of the space behind you.

This will feel weird the first time you try it, but after a few trials, you'll notice a feeling of calm in your mind and body as the internal chatter has stopped.

This technique can also be done anywhere, anytime as long as you're not operating any kind of machinery or are required to pay full attention to the task at hand.

So what?

If you still struggle to quiet the internal dialogue, here are a few more tips for you. Often, your anxiety makes you ask a lot of "what if" questions. Questions like "what if I can't do it", "what if I fail", "what if they laugh", etc.

You can change their impact by adding a simple word at the beginning of those questions: **"So"**.

So what if I can't do it? So what if I fail? So what if they laugh? This simple trick forces you to look ahead of issue instead of being stuck in fear in front of it. The "So what" also instill the idea of challenging those negative thoughts and fighting back.

Watch that tone!

What you can also do is to change the tonality of that negative voice. Imagine if the voice that tells you “*you’re not good enough*” or “*you’re just like your dad*” sounds like Alvin the Chipmunk, it doesn’t have the same effect now, does it?

You can go the other way and repeat those negative statements slower, separating the words from each other. Then again, five times slower. Then again until they lose all meaning and negative charge.

Grounding

If you feel a panic or anxiety attack coming, there are 5 steps to take to help create progress towards finding symptom reduction and/or relief. These steps might not be overnight magic but can significantly help reduce symptoms of anxiety, trauma triggers, and other unwanted emotions or thoughts.

Start with deep breathing as the introduction to any coping skills. Then go through the numbers in order to help ground yourself in present thinking through external factors:

Acknowledge **FIVE** things you **see** around you. Maybe it is a bird, maybe it is pencil, maybe it is a spot on the ceiling, however big or small, state 5 things you see.

Acknowledge **FOUR** things you can **touch** around you. Maybe this is your hair, hands, ground, grass, pillow, etc, whatever it may be, list out the 4 things you can feel.

Acknowledge **THREE** things you **hear**. This needs to be external, do not focus on your thoughts; maybe you can hear a clock, a car, a dog park. or maybe you hear your tummy rumbling, internal noises that make external sounds can count, what is audible in the moment is what you list.

Acknowledge **TWO** things you can **smell**: This one might be hard if you are not in a stimulating environment, if you cannot automatically sniff something out, walk nearby to find a scent. Maybe you walk to your bathroom to smell soap or outside to smell anything in nature, or even could be as simple as leaning over and smelling a pillow on the couch, or a pencil. Whatever it may be, take in the smells around you.

Acknowledge **ONE** thing you can **taste**. What does the inside of your mouth taste like, gum, coffee, or the sandwich from lunch? Focus on your mouth as the last step and take in what you can taste.

The right questions

A very common question anxiety sufferers ask themselves is “*Why*”. Why do I feel like that? Why me? Why can't I be more normal?

“*Why*” is a dangerous question when you're stuck. “*Why*” does nothing and leave you where you are. Worse, your brain will always attempt to answer your questions, so be careful what you ask. Ask yourself why you feel scared and your brain will work hard to find answer why you should be!

“*Why*” keeps you stuck. “*Why*” assigns blame. “*Why*” gets nothing done.

Imagine you come across an accident and you're the first person there. Do you spend your time wondering why the person crashed their car into the tree? I hope not. Instead, you take action, even if the action is simply calling 999, or checking on the injured if you are able to do so. Let the police or the insurance worry about the “*why*”.

The same thing applies here. You can look back at your anxiety disorder and analyse it when you're in a better place.

There are 2 magic questions you can use instead:

- What do I want?
- How do I get it?

There's also the variant “*Where do I want to go? How do I get there?*”.

“*What do I want?*” primes your brain to look forward, helps you move on. You might not know right now what you want but it's fine. Your brain, being an answer-making machine, will come up with an answer if you give it enough time.

Once you have your target, “*how do I get it/there?*” helps you act toward it. Again, the answer might not be instant. Subconsciously, you'll be on the lookout for tools, resources and opportunities that will help you on your new quest. “*What do I want?*” sets your GPS navigation system, “*how do I get it?*” forces your brain to calculate the route.

This set of question is very useful whenever you're stuck, no matter how important or trivial the subject matter is. It can apply for your career choice, what you want out of a relationship, what you want out of life or what you want for dinner.

Self-Hypnosis

Hypnosis is a natural condition involving focused attention and an enhanced capacity to respond to suggestion. It is something we do all the time naturally, and you can harness that skill to your benefit. Technically, all hypnosis is self-hypnosis, but in this section, we mean doing hypnosis alone, giving yourself your own suggestion without the help and guidance of a hypnotist.

Here are 3 tips to help you with self-hypnosis:

1. Find a place where you won't be disturbed. If you need to keep track of time set an alarm.
2. Set a regular day and time to practice self-hypnosis. By doing the self-hypnosis at a regular time and day, it helps to prime ourselves for the session.
3. Spend a few minutes before you attempt to hypnotize yourself to set your intention for the hypnotic session (relax, find answer to a problem, letting go of something, etc..)

Betty Erickson "3-2-1" technique

Betty Erickson was the wife of psychiatrist Milton Erickson, the father of modern hypnotherapy. While Milton reshaped and redefined the field of hypnosis, Betty was also remarkable in helping people learn self-hypnosis. It is reported that she often helped prime clients for Milton Erickson.

Her technique is very simple to remember. It involves focusing on your senses, a bit like the grounding technique, but it aims to make you focus inwardly. There are many variations of this technique and here is how I recommend you do it:

- Start by breathing deeply, focusing on your breath throughout the practice. As you breathe out, drop the shoulder and think "*relax*".
- Then close your eyes. Even though your eyes are closed, pay attention to **3 things you can see** in your immediate environment or in your mind. It can be colours, pictures on walls, things outside the windows, colours and shapes behind your eyelid etc.
- Then focus on **3 things which you can hear**. For example, someone walking around the house, a car passing by, the sound of your own breathing.

- Next focus on **3 things which you can feel**. For example, how your clothes feel on your skin. What you are sitting or standing on. How does the room in feel, hot or cold or something in between?
- The next part is to repeat the same cycle, except this time you pay attention to **two things you see, hear and feel**. It is ok for them to be the same things.
- The last cycle in this chain involves noticing **one thing you see, hear and feel**.

If your still not in a reasonable trance state, repeat until you are. The next phase would be to give yourself some beneficial suggestions. For instance, you might suggest to yourself that you are more easily able to relax when talking to someone.

“Military secret” sleep technique

Well, it's not really a secret anymore since it has resurfaced on so many online health forums lately. It was first mentioned in a 1981 book called "*Relax and Win: Championship Performance*". It is reported to be a technique the US Navy Pre-Flight School developed to help soldiers fall asleep day or night, in any conditions. The technique is simple, and the US Navy stated that after six weeks of practice, 96% of pilots could fall asleep within two minutes.

It goes like this:

- Relax the muscles in your face, including tongue, jaw and the muscles around the eyes
- Drop your shoulders as far down as they'll go, followed by your upper and lower arm, one side at a time
- Breathe out, relaxing your chest followed by your legs, starting from the thighs and working down
- You should then spend 10 seconds trying to clear your mind before thinking about one of the three following images:
 - o You're lying in a canoe on a calm lake with nothing but a clear blue sky above you
 - o You're lying in a black velvet hammock in a pitch-black room
 - o You say "don't think, don't think, don't think" to yourself over and over for about 10 seconds

Therapy

If you struggle to manage your anxiety disorder or you just want to get rid of it, therapy would be strongly recommended. Whether you are stuck in an anxious state, or your anxiety system is overreacting too frequently, you may need external help to change this. To use the first-aid box analogy again, maybe the mental health issue you're suffering from needs more than just a plaster.

There are many types of therapies about and it's important to find the one that works best for you. Everybody reacts differently so don't just rely solely on testimony from friends. What worked or didn't work for them will be different for you.

Counselling

Counselling is a talking therapy that involves a trained therapist listening to you and helping you find ways to deal with emotional issues. Sometimes the term "*counselling*" is used to refer to talking therapies in general, but counselling is also a type of therapy in its own right. You'll be encouraged to talk about your feelings and emotions with a trained therapist, who'll listen and support you without judging or criticising. The therapist can help you gain a better understanding of your feelings and thought processes in order to help you find your own solutions to problems. Because of that, they won't usually give advice or tell you what to do.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

CBT is a structured psychological treatment which recognises that the way we think (cognition) and act (behaviour) affects the way we feel. CBT involves working with a professional therapist to identify thought and behaviour patterns that are either making you more likely to become anxious, or stopping you from getting better when you're experiencing anxiety. Once you've recognised any unhelpful patterns that are contributing to your anxiety, you can make changes to replace these with new ones that reduce anxiety and improve your coping skills.

For example, you might find yourself stuck in catastrophising thinking patterns. This means thinking the worst, believing something is far worse than it actually is, or anticipating things will go wrong. CBT helps by teaching you to think more realistically and focus on problem-solving. If you actively avoid situations or things that cause anxiety, CBT can help you face your fears and approach these situations more rationally.

Hypnotherapy

What is hypnosis?

Hypnosis is, perhaps, one of the most misunderstood and controversial methods of psychological treatment. The myths and misconceptions that surround hypnotherapy mostly stem from people's ideas about stage hypnotism. The truth is that stage hypnotism is essentially a theatrical performance and has about as much in common with bona fide clinical hypnosis as many Hollywood movies have with real life.

Simply put, hypnosis is a state of highly focused attention or concentration, often associated with relaxation, and heightened suggestibility. To be successfully hypnotised, a person must want to undergo the process voluntarily. While under hypnosis (i.e., in a hypnotic trance), it seems many people are much more open to helpful suggestions than they usually are. Contrary to popular belief, people under hypnosis are in total control of themselves and would never do anything they would normally find highly objectionable. You are more receptive, not gullible.

What is hypnotherapy?

Hypnotherapy is the use of hypnosis for the treatment and alleviation of a variety of physical and psychological symptoms. Hypnosis allows the therapist to communicate directly with the subconscious part of the client's mind. This is always done with the cooperation of the client, without which, hypnosis cannot happen. Hypnotherapy is about teamwork between the therapist and the client.

Why do we bother with the subconscious? The subconscious mind has 6 vital functions:

1. **Memory.** The subconscious holds all the information and experiences you've ever had.
2. **Body control.** The subconscious regulates the involuntary functions of the body, such as breathing, circulation, digestion and elimination.
3. **Emotions.** The subconscious is the seat of our emotions and desires, and this accounts for its domination of the conscious mind. When we have conflicting desires, the subconscious one usually wins. In our mind, emotions often beat facts.
4. **Imagination.** Many people say they have no imagination, but although they may have suppressed it, it is still there and active, often working against their best interest.
5. **Habits.** It manages and controls the activity we have reduced to habit, whether it is driving, tying your shoelaces, smoking, mindless eating, etc..

6. **Drive.** The subconscious is the dynamo that directs our energy, the energy that drives us toward our goals in life. If yours has not pushed you toward success and happiness it is time you started giving the orders!

Hypnotherapy allows you to deal with anxiety at the source. Anxiety disorders can have many different causes, from trauma to stress or internal conflict. With hypnosis, you can discover the source of the problem and process it in a safe and relaxed manner, if that's something the client feel is appropriate.

You can also learn to create, tweak or abandon strategies in order to move forward in a healthier and more productive manner.

At the very least, hypnosis will help you experience relaxation, both physical and mental. This alone goes a long way to help reduce anxiety levels.

Hypnotherapy can be used as a standalone therapy, and it can also be used in conjunction with other type of therapies to reinforce them at a deeper level. It is common for people to have CBT and also have hypnotherapy in order to address the issue at a different level, leading to a more holistic approach.

It is also very frequent for hypnotherapists to integrate elements of counselling and NLP (neuro-linguistic programming) during their sessions to give their clients the best chances of success in achieving their goals.

About me

My name is Christophe Courtin. I am a clinical hypnotherapist at Folkestone Hypnotherapy, specialising in stress, anxiety and depression management, working in Folkestone, Kent and the surrounding areas.

While I specialise in helping with anxiety and stress, I can also help you in many other areas such as phobias, smoking cessation, chronic pain, motivation, low self-esteem, etc,...

I am also a second-dan black belt and instructor in Aikido. From this experience, I am keen to use hypnosis and visualisation in martial arts and other sports in order to improve focus and performance.

To know more about hypnotherapy and the services I offer, you can visit my website:
<https://www.folkestone-hypnotherapy.co.uk/>

You can also pay a visit to my Facebook page and contact me from there:
<https://www.facebook.com/folkestone.hypnotherapy/>

Email me at info@folkestone-hypnotherapy.co.uk or call 01303 684056.

I am available to have a chat, either by phone, email or via Facebook. So feel free to contact me if you have any question or concern about anxiety, hypnotherapy or any other issues you think I might be able to help you with.

And please remember, I made it my job to help people. I am happy for you to call and share your problems with me, I want to help you (or someone you know) get better.

Useful online resources

Anxiety UK

Charity providing support if you have been diagnosed with an anxiety condition.

Phone: 03444 775 774 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5.30pm)

Website: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

CALM

CALM is the Campaign Against Living Miserably, for men aged 15 to 35.

Phone: 0800 58 58 58 (daily, 5pm to midnight)

Website: www.thecalmzone.net

Cruse Bereavement Care

Phone: 0844 477 9400 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

Website: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk

Mind

Promotes the views and needs of people with mental health problems.

Phone: 0300 123 3393 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm)

Website: www.mind.org.uk

Relate

The UK's largest provider of relationship support.

Website: www.relate.org.uk

Rethink Mental Illness

Support and advice for people living with mental illness.

Phone: 0300 5000 927 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4pm)

Website: www.rethink.org

Samaritans

Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

Phone: 116 123 (free 24-hour helpline)

Website: www.samaritans.org.uk